DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 227 285 CE 035 318

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TITLE Interpersonal Skills and Communication. Apprentice Related Training Module.
INSTITUTION Conserva, Inc., Raleigh, N.C.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Vocational and Adult Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 82
CONTRACT 300-80-0937
NOTE 39p.; For related documents, see CE 035 315-335.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Apprenticeships; Career Education; *Communication Skills; Definitions; *Interpersonal Communication; *Interpersonal Competence; Listening Habits; *Listening Skills; Postsecondary Education; Pretests Posttests; *Questioning Techniques

ABSTRACT

One in a series of core instructional materials for apprentices to use during the first or second years of apprentice-related subjects training, this booklet deals with interpersonal skills and communication. The first section consists of an outline of the content and scope of the core materials as well as a self-assessment pretest. Covered in the three instructional chapters included in the booklet are communication requirements and components, listening, and asking questions. Each chapter contains an overview; an introduction and objectives; principles, examples, and applications; additional information; and self-test exercises. Appended to the booklet are answers to the self-assessment pretest, answers to the self-test exercises, a posttest, and answers to the posttest. (MN)

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ED227285

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS AND COMMUNICATION

Apprentice Related Training Module

Eric Rice
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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Raleigh, North Carolina

Contract No. 300800937

Department of Education
Office of Vocational and Adult Education

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Glossary

The words on this list are used in this booklet. Please review the terms and learn the definitions. The meaning of the words in the text may not be the form of the word with which you are familiar.

Words/Terms

1. *Acute* Critical or of greatest importance
2. *Bias* A prejudice or mental preference
3. *Contradiction* Contrary to, inconsistent with or in opposition to
4. *Conversants* Parties (people) engaged in a conversation
5. *Conviction* Strongly held belief
6. *Cumulative* Gathering or accumulating in strength
7. *Eloquent* Polished use of language
8. *Expectations* Looking forward to as certain or probable
9. *Facilitate* To make easier or more convenient
10. *Formulate* To generate or to order in exact form
11. *Gist* The main idea
12. *Inferences* Conclusions reached by reasoning
13. *Insidious* Treacherous or deceitful
14. *Insight* Perception into the real character of something
15. *Interpret* To explain or give meaning
16. *Judgmental* Having decided upon the value of something based on its merits
17. *Olfactory* Sensation by way of smell
18. *Overstimulation* Excited to too great an extent
19. *Preconceived* An idea or opinion formed in advance
20. *Preoccupation* Engrossed in thought or action
21. *Proportionate* Things existing in some steady relation to each other
22. *Tactile* Sensation by way of touch
23. *Vignette* A short description that depicts something

1. How To Use This Booklet

What Is This Series About?

Interpersonal Skills and Communication is one of ten booklets written as core instructional materials for apprentices to use during the first or second years of apprenticeship related subjects training. Nine of the booklets are about critical subject areas for apprentices, as determined by a national group of experts on apprenticeship and training. The tenth booklet introduces the other booklets and explains how to use the materials in the instructional setting.

The materials are designed to be used with other related subjects instructional materials. They can be employed in one of two ways: (1) the materials can be used as the total instructional materials package for some trades, in subjects such as basic science, measurement, and working in organizations; or (2) they can be used as supplementary, introductory or practice materials in subjects such as basic mathematics, safety and an introduction to apprenticeship.

The books are written in a self-instructional, self-paced format. They can be used either in instructor supervised or independent study arrangements. *Each booklet and each chapter is written as a distinct unit and is addressed to a single major topic.* This means that you or your instructor can select individual booklets or chapters without necessarily using every booklet or every chapter within a booklet.

The booklets emphasize application of facts, concepts and skills. Material is presented by means of written information, visual illustration and applied example. The discussion for most major topics also includes an application section that requires you as a learner to demonstrate what you are learning. In addition, each chapter contains a section entitled Self-Test Exercises that contains questions, problems and exercises for you to work through as a final application of the knowledge or skill and to show that you have mastered the materials.

The titles of the booklets in the core materials are:

1. A Basic Core Curriculum
2. Introduction to Apprenticeship
3. Basic Mathematics
4. Basic Safety I
5. Basic Safety II
6. Basic Measurement
7. Sketching, Drawing and Blueprint Reading
8. Basic Physical Science
9. Working in Organizations
10. Interpersonal Skills and Communication

What Is This Booklet About?

Communication is an activity in which at least two people exchange information by using symbols such as words or pictures in order to convey ideas and express what each person is trying to say to the other person. Words are the tools of communication just as lathes and hammers are tools for other

types of work. However, because words are such a common fact of everyday life, there is a tendency to take them, and the meanings they express, for granted. Indeed, because listening and speaking are so much a constant and continuous part of everyday life they are often ignored; seldom are they addressed as skill areas for most adults.

In truth, communication is not random. Rather, it is absolutely intentional and occurs when one person attempts to express or explain something to at least one other person. Communication begins inside the individual and is made a joint effort as that individual shares a communication with another. It involves a set of skills including the skills of listening, speaking and questioning, and attending to the general prerequisites of communication. These skills are addressed in this module under the chapter headings of:

1. Communication Requirements And Components
2. Listening
3. Asking Questions

What Must I Do To Complete My Work In This Booklet?

Working your way through this booklet will require you to read the text, to answer the questions, to perform the exercies and to complete the Pretest and Posttest instruments. Expect to spend about five hours working through the materials. The only resources you need to complete your work in this booklet are: (1) a copy of the booklet; (2) a pencil or pen; (3) a ruler; and (4) about four hours of time.

The materials are written in self-instructional, programmed format. You need not complete your work in the booklet at one sitting.

Each chapter in the booklet is devoted to a single skill, competency or unit of knowledge. The general format of the chapters is similar with the following parts:

1. A *chapter overview* containing all the necessary information you need to know in order to work through the chapter.
2. An *introduction* describing the knowledge or skill and the instructional objectives for the information.
3. *Principles, examples and applications* presenting and explaining the content as well as offering you practice opportunities to apply the information.
4. Additional sources of *information.*
5. *A self-test exercise* for applying the information under consideration.

This booklet concludes with an Appendix that contains the answers to the Pretest, the Self-test exercises from each chapter and the Posttest.

How Much Do I Know About The Subject As I Begin?

Begin your work in *Interpersonal Skills and Communication* by completing the self-assessment pretest that follows. When you have completed the pretest as directed in the assessment instructions and have finished reading the other material in this introductory section, continue your work in this booklet, one chapter at a time. Begin with Chapter 2 unless the results of your self-assessment indicate that you should do otherwise.

In each chapter, do the following:

1. Read:
   - Background information
   - Steps and procedures for performing skilled activities and explanations of major points and ideas.
   - Examples illustrating use of information, performance or skill, or application of material
2. Consider the questions and exercises in the text. Work the questions and check your answers.
3. When you believe that you have mastered the material, take the Self-Test at the end of the chapter.
4. Check your answers with those provided in the Appendix at the end of the booklet. If you achieve at least the minimum acceptable score, move to the next chapter. If your score is below acceptable levels, work through the chapter again.

Self-Assessment Pretest

Directions: The purpose of the self-assessment is to assist you to focus on specific areas that are strengths and limitations of your knowledge and skills of interpersonal communication. Select the best answer for each question and record it in the appropriate space. After you have worked through the entire pretest, check your answers with those provided in the Appendix and score your test following the directions at the bottom of the pretest.

1. What part of the communication process concerns suggesting a program of action to respond to another person's comment? Answer: _____

2. Only the speaker in a conversation has responsibility for conveying meaning in a conversation. Answer: True or False

3. Which of the following behaviors is *not* associated with the communication process of "attending" to the other person?
   a) speaking to the speaker
   b) eye contact
   c) listening for feeling and emotion from the speaker
   d) avoiding physical objects that might serve as barriers between you and speaker

4. On the average, how much of the average face-to-face message is conveyed by non-verbal means?
   a) 20% c) 50%
   b) 40% d) 70%

5. What happens to your message if you say one thing but do something else? Answer: _____

6. Which of the following types of communication devices is *least useful* for clearly conveying and understanding a spoken message?
   a) examples
   b) eye contact
   c) feedback
   d) repetition

7. If you offer feedback to a speaker after receiving a communication, you should do which of the following?
   a) focus on description and observation

b) focus on behavior and individual personality
c) focus on judgment and evaluation

8. About how many words per minute can the average person's mind process?
   a) 250
   b) 500
   c) 750
   d) 1000

9. Which of the following behaviors is *not* a bad listening habit?
   a) trying to outline everything you hear
   b) avoiding difficult material
   c) preparing your responses before the speaker finishes what he/she is saying
   d) criticizing the speaker's mannerisms or gestures
   e) resisting distractions

10. As an average listener, if you hear a conversation today, about how much of it are you likely to remember tomorrow?
   a) 20%
   b) 40%
   c) 60%

11. Place in order of importance, from most important to least important, the following techniques for improving listening effectiveness.
   a) separate fact and opinion
   b) listen to an idea all the way through before forming an opinion
   c) ask clarifying question or make summary statements
   d) determine the importance of the information to us

12. Which of the following items is *not* a use of questions for apprentices?
   a) ask for and receive feedback
   b) clarify expectations and requirements
   c) build self-esteem
   d) offer an opinion
   e) offer assistance and encouragement

13. Read the following question and suggest what may be wrong with it.
   "Am I to read the information on metric measurement and on unions from the text and work the exercises?"

   Answer: _____

14. Which of the following factors is *least* important in asking good questions?
   a) timing
   b) grammar
   c) voice tone
   d) tact/assertiveness

15. What is the purpose and what is the intent of the following question?
   Question: "Why is it important to learn to ask questions?"
   Answers: Purpose _____

   Intent _____

2. Communication Requirements and Components

Chapter Overview

Purpose:	To insure that each apprentice masters fundamental communication skills.
Preassesment: **Score:**	Write in the following space the number of correct answers from pretest questions 1-7_____. If you answered at least six correctly, skip to Chapter 3. If you missed two or more, continue work in this chapter.
Resources:	Time - at least 60 minutes to complete. Material - pencil.
Performance Statement:	At the conclusion of your work in this chapter you critique communication and recall information such that you can point out strengths, limitations and communication strategies.
Performance Measure:	A fifteen-minute paper-and-pencil test to be taken in the related subjects setting.
Standards:	To be successful you must answer at least 70 percent of the posttest items correctly.
Activities:	1. Read text examples and illustrations and commit information to memory. 2. Work questions, examples and problems. 3. Complete and check the self-test exercises and posttest.

Introduction and Objectives

Thoughts, ideas, feelings and understandings are individual or personal experiences. To share these events, you must communicate with another person. The most frequent form of communication for human beings is speech. Using words, as well as gestures and expressions, people are able to explore, express, test and share meaning. Such sharing is possible *if* the people involved in the communication use words, gestures, and expressions in a way that accurately conveys meaning and if the people involved in the conversation attend to what each is trying to convey to the other. This two-way type of communication is critical. Each party in the communication must work to clarify, present and understand individual communications.

This chapter is about elements within the process of interpersonal communication. It addresses several of the more important components in the communication process including non-verbal communication, feedback, and verbal communication. When you have completed your work in this unit, you will demonstrate your understanding by being able to:

1. Identify elements of a communication:
2. Critique and clarify samples of individual communications in the work setting;
3. Critique communication and provide feedback; and
4. Interpret and respond to non-verbal communication.

Principles, Examples and Applications

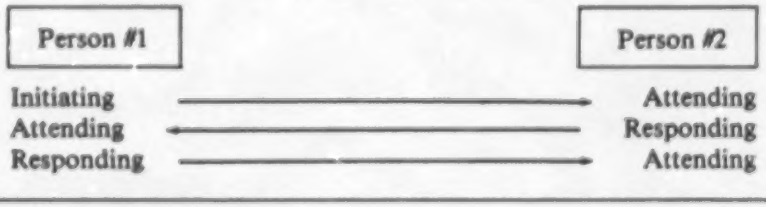
The Communication Process

Suppose as an apprentice, you are working at your station when another apprentice on the floor who has been working on a different machine walks into your area. With an irritated scowl on his face, he curses and complains about having been "ordered by the foreman to stop working on the press and to sweep up this area." You remember that recently the apprentice had been moved from clean-up duty to working on the new printing press and was excited about finally learning some skills with the machines. Further, the trainee had been looking forward to working on the large, rush printing order the shop had received for that week. Suddenly and without explanation he had been taken off the job before it even began. He picked up the push broom and began sweeping, but he was not happy about it. No one spoke to him.

Three basic points are important in this situation. First, people tend to react to the *way* something is said and to what is *not said* rather than to *what* is said. The foreman, overhearing the apprentice's complaint, may tell him to shut up and stop complaining and completely miss the fact that the apprentice is disappointed and confused. Second, what people say and how they say it usually is based on the way people feel. Feelings influence behavior and particularly communication. Understanding feelings is essential to interpreting a communication. The apprentice was angry at having been given no explanation for why he had been "demoted" to clean-up detail. Further, he was disappointed about not getting to work and contribute on an important job for the company. The person speaking needed to realize that feelings affect communication. If a speaker is aware of feelings then he or she can say what is meant. Third, for there to be meaningful communication, people must share meaning. They must speak with one another and engage in the process of (a) initiating communication, (b) attending to communication and (c) responding in communication.

The communication process is illustrated in Figure 1. The arrows indicate the direction of the flow of communication.

Figure 1: The Communication Process



Initiating

The first part of the communication process is termed initating. It refers to the process of speaking and gesturing to someone else in order to begin a conversation or communication. It involves (a) deciding what you want to say; (b) making the other conversants aware (or getting their attention) of your desire and intention to communicate; and (c) offering your comments. In deciding what you want to say, you must decide on both the purpose and the intent of your comment or question. Your purpose is the "why" of your comment and your intent is "what" you hope to achieve. Remember, your feelings and your reason influence both what you want to say and how you want to say it.

Getting the attention of the other conversants is the second task in the initiation process. Sometimes the speaker does this by simply appearing on the scene, sometimes by gesturing, and sometimes with his or her voice. In the example of the upset apprentice in the print shop, he got the attention of everyone else by coming into the room and by raising his voice in anger. In other instances, whispers, questions, shouts or simply speaking may be sufficent for getting attention.

The third part of the initiating process is offering your comment. As an initiator, you offer words and gestures to indicate what you mean. Again, remember that not only what you say, but also (a) how you say it, (b) the gestures you use, and (c) what you do not say are as important as what you say. Ideas about ways to speak effectively are included elsewhere in this chapter.

Attending

The process of attending to the communication of the initiator in a conversation involves paying attention, listening, observing, and thinking about what is being said. This process involves avoiding having objects such as desks between you and the person speaking, watching for non-verbal clues to the meaning of the message being spoken, listening to the words spoken and unspoken, establishing and maintaining eye contact with the speaker, and considering both what is said and the way it is said. Do not forget to take the feeling (emotion) of the speaker into account as you think about the meaning of the communication.

The process of attending is absolutely critical. It is the way you come to understand. It is so important that other parts of this chapter are devoted to non-verbal communication. A whole chapter is devoted to listening, the most critical part of the attending process.

Responding

The third part of the communication process is responding. It includes considering what the other person has said; capturing the gist of what was said and certifying that your understanding is correct; using words that show that you understand the message spoken; formulating your response; and delivering your response. Responding encompasses all the elements of initiating except that awareness/attention has been established because the speaker offered an original comment to which the respondent replied. Further, responding has the added responsiblity of requiring the responding conversant to use the initial comment as the basis for his or her own comment. The anticedent comment must serve as the stimulus and background for the responding comment in order for meaning to be shared.

Factors That Influence Communication

Communication is a two-way process that involves both the sender and receiver of information in working with the words and gestures that constitute the message sent and received. A number of fac-

tors influence the effectiveness of communications. Among the more important factors are those of self, attitude/outlook, and language.

Self

Your experience as a communicator influences your ability to communicate effectively. If you lack self-confidence or experience, you may hestiate to engage in conversation or may be reluctant to ask clarifying questions. This may result in little personal growth in either self-confidence or experience.

Figure 2 is a communication skills survey that will help you to consider your strengths and limitations related to communication situations. Take a few minutes and complete the survey by checking the appropriate column. Answer honestly and remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

Figure 2: Communication Survey

Item	YES (Usually-Always)	NO (Seldom-Never)
1. Is is difficult for you to talk with other people?		
2. Is it difficult for you to accept criticism?		
3. Does it seem that people usually are interested in what you have to say?		
4. If you do not understand something that someone has said, do you ask the speaker to explain the comment or directions?		
5. Do you think that people usually understand your comments without attitional explanation?		
6. Do the words you speak usually come out the way you want them to?		
7. Do you pay attention when other people are talking? (Don you catch yourself not paying attention?)		
8. In conversations, do you talk more than the other people?		
9. When talking, do you allow the other person to finish speaking before you begin.		
10. Do you agree or disagree with others because of concern about how they will feel about you?		

Adapted from: R.E. Nelsen. *Occupational Survival Skills*. Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; 1979.

Look back over your answers. If you answered any of the questions in the following way, you have identified areas where you may need to work.

	Probably O.K.	Probably Needs Work
#1	No	Yes
#2	No	Yes
#3	Yes	No
#4	Yes	No
#5	Yes	No
#6	Yes	No
#7	Yes	No
#8	No	Yes
#9	Yes	No
#10	No	Yes

Self-concept and self-image are directly affected by communication skills because everyone is aware of how other people respond to what they say. It is important because the way you present yourself in words and actions has a great deal to do with how well the words you are speaking are accepted.

Attitude and Outlook

Communicating with words and gestures creates problems of misunderstanding because words are, at best, symbols. Their meanings change as the context in which they are spoken change. Further, words sometimes mean different things to different people. Problems occur when the speaker and listener assume that the way each individual uses a word is exactly the way the other also uses a word. The result can be confusion because there can be no shared meaning if there is no agreement about the meaning of words between the sender and the receiver of a message.

The problem of context is further complicated by the attitudes of the people engaged in the conversation. For example, people hear what they expect and want to hear. Past experience and current needs or wants condition everyone to listen, see and read selectively. As a result, sometimes the people to whom you speak miss completely the point you are making even though you have spoken carefully. Likewise, sometimes the listener will focus on a relatively minor part of the message that was related to the listener's past experience while missing the primary point of the message. In similar fashion, being cold, hot, hungry, tired, bored, angry, excited, or nervous can cause the listener to focus on only a small part of a message and to miss the major ideas.

Another compounding problem associated with the influence of attitudes and situations on understanding meaning is the tendency of everyone to evaluate the message they receive. It is only natural for a listener to hear a speaker and to decide if he or she agrees or disagrees with what is said from his or her own point of view. Often listeners consider messages in terms of right-wrong, good-bad, reasonable-illogical and so forth without regard to the possiblity that the message may either not need to be evaluated *or* may be both good and bad or somewhere between reasonable and illogical. Remember, to evaluate means to place, to compare and to value what is said in terms of your own values. Only after understanding the facts can you place a value on what is said.

Language

The meaning of words depends on the context in which they are used as well as the past experience of the people who are using the words. Remember, there is no communication if the persons engaged in the conversation do not agree on the meaning of the words. Words are simply tools for conveying meaning in communication in the same way that saws and hammers are the tools for building a house. As with saws and hammers, you must practice using words in order to become a skillful user of the tools. Practice comes from reading, from writing, from speaking and from thinking. Additional practice comes from avoiding problems that arise in language use. These problems include:

Use of Jargon. Every group of friends and workers develops its own special language or its own special words with particular meanings. This is especially true in the skilled trades where one of the important tasks is to learn the terms, slang and jargon of the trade. Remember, persons outside your trade and/or your group of friends may not understand the particular meaning you have for certain words. Likewise, you may know the exact meaning other people apply to particular words.

Emotional Words. Words convey emotion. Sometimes for very unusual reasons a simple word like union or management or conservative or liberal can convey a message that was not intended by the speaker. In such instances, the listener heard only what he/she consciously or unconsciously wanted to hear because of past experiences and the emotions associated with those experiences.

Assuming Too Much. Everyone assumes too often that the person to whom they are speaking (or writing) knows more about the message being sent than they actually do. Who has not been in a conversation in which they did not know what the speaker was saying even though the speaker believed they did. Always assume the person with whom you are speaking *does not know* what you are talking about unless they tell you otherwise.

Non-Verbal Communication

People communicate not only through words, but also through gestures, eye contact, facial expressions, and posture. In fact, people learn to communicate through gestures months before they learn to speak and years before they learn to write. It is a skill used throughout life. Non-verbal communication facilitates both speaking and listening. Findings from a number of research studies suggest that perhaps as much as 70 percent of any face-to-face message is conveyed non-verbally. This means that the tone of your voice and the look in your eyes are at least as important as what you say. Further, when words and gestures are used together, they greatly reinforce the spoken communication. For example, say you see a long-time acquaintance whom you have not seen in some time. You say, "I'm really glad to see you!" Obviously, you are conveying a message, but image how much stronger that message would be if your words were accompanied by a firm handshake, an embrace, a smile, a hearty and excited voice tone, or emphasis on the word "really'. In this latter instance, gestures and words support and reinforce one another.

There are three major types of non-verbal communication of concern: (1) consistency, (2) voice tone, and (3) eye contact and posture. Each is a tool for effective communication.

Consistency

Remember that actions speak at least as loudly and as eloquently as words. If you say something like "Nice job" to another worker, but do so in an insincere tone of voice, or without pause in the context of another conversation, or without really paying attention to the product of the work, you will generate confusion. Your words will have said one thing but your actions will have said something else. Remember, when a contradition occurs between verbal communication and non-verbal communication, usually the non-verbal message will prevail. Actions are more eloquent than words.

Voice Tone

The sound of your voice usually reflects your innermost feelings. Factors of concern include pitch, quality/volume and rate/rhythm. Of particular concern is pitch or the relative highness or lowness of your voice. Lower pitches usually mean relatively little enthusiasm or interest while a relatively high pitch means excitement. Usually a varied pitch indicates interest in the topic under consideration and a concern of the speaker.

Quality and volume are factors in reinforcing the messages of words. Through varying the volume, you can emphasize certain ides, phrases, or words. Voice clarity indicates the emotional state of the speaker; for example, often if you are tense or unsure, your voice will sound unsteady and unsure.

Rate/rhythm also indicate to the person to whom you are speaking something about how you feel. Rapid delivery of comments from a speaker may mean that the conversation is inconvenient or not perceived to be necessary. Faster rates coupled with short, tense comments frequently signal irritation. Long comments, slow rates, and few pauses may signal indecision while frequent pauses may signal indecision, tension or resistance. And silence...remember that silence is eloquent. It can signal anger, interest, boredom, confusion, agreement or any of a number of things. Always view silence in the context of whatever else is going on.

Eye Contact and Posture

Eye contact may convey more information than any other means of communication. Who has not been silenced by a withering look from a spouse, supervisor, friend, or parent? Remember that eye contact is a two-way exchange of information. The speaker "feels" your attention; conversely, you can get a better understanding of what the speaker is saying by observing facial expressions and eye movement. It is virtually an unwritten rule of communication in this society that when you talk with someone, you look at them and they look at you. Likewise, if you look at someone, most peple feel they should talk.

By establishing and maintaining eye contact, the speaker is signaling interest in expressing and having a point understood. Likewise, establishing and maintaining eye contact frequently is an expression of confidence and sincerity. Note, however, that eye contact and staring are not the same thing and that staring often is considered rude and makes the person who you are looking at feel uncomfortable.

Posture is another critical non-verbal cue in communication. If you are engaged in communication, how you sit affects the speaker. If, for example, you are being spoken with and you slump back in your chair, you tend to indicate disinterest or resistance. Instead, if you sit comfortably, relaxed and slightly inclined toward the speaker, you indicate interest. Not only does this make the speaker understand that you are supporting and listening, it also tends to make you feel like you should be listening.

Exercises

By way of review of information about non-verbal communication, answer the following questions:

1. A supervisor explained that a certain work procedure was to be done in a prescribed manner, following steps a, b, c, and d. Later, however, you observed the supervisor and several journeymen doing the job using the steps in the sequence of a, d, c, b rather than a, b, c, d. What communication would you most likely believe and why?

Answer: Which communication? _____

Why?_____

2. How does eye contact affect both the speaker and the listener?

Answer: Speaker_____

Listener: _____ _____

3. Spend 15 minutes observing communication around you. Note the (a) posture, (b) eye contact, (c) gestures, (d) voice tone, and (e) consistency of the participants. What does your observation til you about the communication?

Answers:

1. Which? - a, d, c, b Why? Actions speak louder than words.
2. Speaker - eye contact from listeners indicates attention, interest and support; Listener -eye contact from speaker indicates sincerity, directness and interest.

Ways of Improving the Two-Way Communication Process

There are several direct ways of improving the two-way communication process including using feedback and developing effective speaking/writing techniques. Each is discussed in turn below.

Feedback

Effective communication requires practice at giving the speaker clear indictions of how much of the message you understand as well as practice at receiving such indications from the person to whom you are speaking. This process is called giving and receiving feedback. It has a great deal to do with how well people perform in carrying out assignments. Only if you understand what is expected of you can you do a good job.

The rules and guidelines for feedback are as follows:

1. Focus feedback on description rather than judgement—in offering feedback, concentrate on "what" is happening rather than "why" something is happening. The "what" is usually observable whereas the "why" frequently is a guess on your part. In addition, the "what" usually can be described, discussed and reassessed if necessary. Further, by clarifying the "what" you learn exactly what behaviors are expected. Avoid overloading description with too many details but always try to include examples.

2. Focus feedback on observable behaviors rather than on personality or inferences—observations and behavior are events that can be seen and/or heard by everyone whereas inferences are guesses about what is going on, or why. Observable feedback deals with what is going on at the moment or has recently been completed. It rarely deals with events in the distant past. The currency of feedback makes it more useful and easier to concentrate on. Further, by focusing on events and avoiding judgements of personality and guesses about motives, you remove the tendency of the person with whom you are speaking to be defensive. In dealing with observable behavior, remember you can deal with all aspects of activity. Also, remember, nothing is absolute; rather, things exist in degrees. Concentrate feedback both on things that are done correctly and things that need improvement.

3. Focus feedback on needs of the person to whom it is offered—consider what can be done with the feedback you offer. If it is only likely to satisfy your need to say it, you may not be helping much by offering the feedback. Consider the information needs and emotional state of the person to whom you are speaking. Correct mistakes and offer criticism, but do it in a constructive fashion. Do not use feedback to condemn or threaten another person. Also avoid offering feedback in situations where the person to whom you are speaking has no chance of correcting the action or message, even with good feedback.

In addition to these general guidelines, rmember several other ideas when giving feedback. First, it is a good idea to make a habit of giving and seeking out feedback. This practice will improve your communication skills while improving the possibility that the messages you send and receive are understood. Know that while you may feel awkward doing this at first, your skills will improve with practice as will your abilities to speak, listen and question.

Second, when you are providing feedback, try to provide positive statements, especially if part of the feedback is negative. In addition, be honest and tell people what you think they mean. Further, use an economy of words in order to focus on relatively few ideas, comments or facts.

Third, if the feedback you have offered brings no improvement or change from the other person, do not repeat the feedback. Try some other feedback if you believe it to be warranted, but do not waste your own time if the other person will not listen. Do not threaten the other person if the other person cannot listen.

Effective Speaking/Writing Techniques

As a speaker or writer, there are several things you can do to improve the probability that your communication will be understood correctly. Each of several techniques is noted and discussed below.

Consider and Organize Information. Before speaking (or writing), consider what you want to say in terms of what you want to accomplish with your comments and the order in which you want to make your points. If you know what you want to say and why, your comments will be brief, more concise and more accurate. It is particularly important to organize your facts and ideas if you are arguing a point or trying to persuade someone of something.

Consider Your Audience. To whom are you speaking? Knowing your audience is almost as important as what you will say. Be sure you are saying or writing information of interest, concern or need to the intended audience. Further, speak or write using words familiar to the person or persons with whom you are communicating.

Use Examples. As you offer suggestions, present ideas/concepts or try to make points, offer examples that will help the person(s) with whom you are communicating to understand what you are saying. Draw examples from the experience of the audience because they provide immediate insight. Examples demonstrate both what you are talking about as well as cases that do not apply.

Avoid Distractions. As you speak or write, avoid distractions. Stick to the main points. Avoid being side-tracked and do not introduce confusing ideas. Avoid distracting non-verbal mannerisms and gestures. Make your non-verbal cues reinforce the words you are speaking. Use eye contact and voice emphasis. Avoid impulsive mannerisms like cracking your knuckles or drumming your fingers.

Ask Questions. After you have spoken, ask questions to the person(s) with whom you spoke to see if they understood what you said. Focus first on your overall aim or idea to be sure it was understood before asking about specific facts or ideas. When you are the listener, ask clarifying questions and explain to people what you think they mean. Phrase the questions positively to avoid making the person to whom you direct the question defensive.

Exercises

Check your understanding of communication as a two-way process by answering the following questions.

1. How are the emotions and attitudes of the people involved in a communication important? Answer: _____

2. Why should seeking out and giving feedback become a habit?
   Answer: _____

3. What kinds of distractions must you avoid when communicating with someone else?
   Answer: _____

Answers

1. People speak and listen selectively based on past experience, and attitudes. Some words cause immediate reactions.

2. It improves speaking and listening, both for speaker and listener.
   It insures understanding and sharpens skills.

3. Providing unrelated information; sending confusing verbal and non-verbal messages; using nervous, attention-robbing gestures.

Additional Information

For additional information you might read:

J. W. Keltner, *Elements of Interpersonal Communication* Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1973.

R. E. Nelson. *Occupational Survival Skills.* Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; 1978.

Self-Test Exercises

Answer the following questions about effective communication. Compare your answers with those suggested in the Appendix of this booklet. If you answer 70% of the items correctly continue work in the next chapter. If you score less than 70%, reopen your work in Chapter 2.

1. Attending to the trainee means physically attending, observing and _____ to the trainee.

2. What three major tasks are involved with initiating a conversation?
   Answers: a. _____
   b. _____
   c. _____

3. If your words and your actions are contradictory, which is the listener likely to believe?
   Answer: _____

4. Which of the following non-verbal types of communication conveys the most information?
   a. voice tone
   b. eye contact
   c. hand gestures
   d. posture

5. How is jargon a language problem in spoken and written communication?
   Answer:_____

6. Why should feedback focus on description of behavior?
   Answer: _____

7. What techniques are available for helping you to communicat more effectively with an audience?
   Answer:_____ _____

3. Listening

Chapter Overview

Purpose:	To insure that each apprentice has a working knowledge of facts and skills associated with effective listening.
Preassessment:	Write in the following space the number of correct answers from questions 8-11 _____. If you answered all four correctly, skip to Chapter 5. If you missed one or more questions continue work in this chapter.
Prerequisites:	Chapters 1 and 2 of this module.
Resources:	Time - at least 60 minutes to complete. Material - Pencil.
Performance Statement:	At the conclusion of your work in this chapter, you will explain problems with and techniques for effective listening.
Performance Measure:	A fifteen-minute paper-and-pencil test to be taken in the related subject setting.
Standards:	To be successful you must answer at least 70 percent of the posttest items correctly.
Activities:	1. Read text, examples and illustrations and commit information to memory. 2. Work questions, examples and problems. 3. Complete and check the self-test exercises and posttest.

Introduction And Objectives

Imagine that you are talking with five people when two of them walk away, the third turns to the fourth to speak privately and the fifth responds to your comment with a question that is totally unrelated to what you were saying. Certainly the behavior of the people with whom you were speaking is rude. Just as sure, however, will be your own discomfort and anger, as you realize that no one was listening.

In truth, everyone is guilty of poor listening at some time. Even though as much as 90 percent of all communication is verbal, the average listener remembers only about half of what he or she hears immediately after hearing the information. Within a few hours, only 20 percent to 25 percent of what unconsciously ignore whatever the speaker is saying. Likewise, a listener may decide unconsciously to ing effectiveness decreases as the number of people engaged in the conversation increases. Listening effectiveness also decreases with age. Ineffective listening due to advancing age and increasing numbers of people in the conversation most often is attributable to inattention or preoccupation.

Listening is a natural process. Usually it is taken for granted by individuals and ignored in instructional settings, even when the instructional content is interpersonal communication. Nevertheless, listening involves a specific set of communication skills that can be improved through instruction and practice. The instructional materials in this chapter are focused on improving listening skills. When you have completed your work in this unit, you will demonstrate your competence by being able to:

1. Describe factors that frequently contribute to poor listening and understanding;
2. Suggest procedures for improving listening skills; and
3. Critique conversations and situations to point out potential problems.

Principles, Examples and Applications

Factors Involved with Ineffective Listening

Many factors contribute to ineffective listening. Distractions, emotions, prior learning and prejudging each can contribute to missing critical information during a conversation. Even the listener's own ability to process information can contribute to poor listening habits. More specifically, the average person can talk at a rate of about 125 words per minute; however, the average mind can process about 600 to 800 words per minute. As a result, an individual listener in a conversation is left with "time" to think about other things, "time" to formulate a response for the conversation or "time" to consider carefully the facts and implications of that which is being said.

If several people are involved in the conversation, the listener is left with even more "time". In fact, the larger the number of people involved in a conversation, the greater amount of time any one person spends listening. If just two people are having a conversation, each probably will be talking and listening about 50 percent of the time. If four people are engaged in conversation, each will be listening about 75 percent of the time. This means that not only is there more time for listening, but also there are more opportunities for distraction. As a result, the need to listen carefully increases proportionately as the number of people in the conversation increases.

Typical reasons for ineffective listening, together with a brief explanation of each, are discussed throughout this chapter. As you read about each reason, think about your listening experiences and observe the conversations around you. See how many of these problems you can spot.

Distractions

Distractions are the most frequent cause of ineffective listening. A distraction can be almost anything that is detected by your senses while you are listening to someone else talk. It may be music or other voices that interfere with the voice to which you are listening. Likewise, it may be visual stimuli that you consciously or unconsciously notice, olfactory stimuli that you smell or tactile stimuli that you feel. Almost anything in the environment can become a distraction. Even things not in the environment such as your memory can operate as a distraction if something the speaker says triggers a recollection in your mind.

The distraction problem is especially acute if the listener must sit or stand quietly for long periods of time while listening to the speaker. The attention span of everyone is limited.

Examples of distractions that you may have encountered in job related listening probably include the noise made by nearby machines or equipment while you were talking, sudden changes in lighting or the atmosphere in the area in which you were speaking, or the appearance of a new smell. One or more of these distractions probably have interfered with conversations.

Emotions, Convictions and Biases

A second major cause of ineffective listening is a combination of factors called emotions, convictions, and biases. Often as you listen to a speaker, the words spoken and ideas expressed evoke strong feelings within you. Sometimes you feel anger, sometimes joy, and sometimes excitement. Each kind of emotion can cause you to tune out, unconsciously and unintentionally comments that are in opposition or contradiction to the primary emotion you are feeling.

Convictions are even more problematic than emotions for effective listening. Human beings have a tendency to listen to (and for) only those things that they want to hear. This means that people attend to information that supports their own views while they ignore information that contradicts their own opinions. Often the average listener actually edits conversations simply by cutting out the information that he or she disagrees with.

Biases also edit conversations, but usually in more insidious ways. Biases limit what the listener hears through preconceived notions about the speaker and the message *before* the message is delivered. For example, a listener may look at a speaker and decide that the speaker looks stupid or sloppy and unconsciously ignore whatever the speaker is saying. Likewise, a listener may decide unconsciously to disagree or devalue the message of the speaker without ever listening to it.

Examples of listening ineffectiveness due to emotion, conviction or bias that you may have encountered on the job include worker unwillingness or resistance to listen to a new supervisor because he or she is different from the old supervisor; because he or she is a woman, a minority or a disabled individual; or because he or she uses different mannerisms, speech patterns, or communication techniques. Emotions most frequently cause ineffective listening on the job when certain emotionally loaded words like "union", "boss", "scab", or "goldbrick", are used inappropriately. Emotions aroused by using inappropriate words and phrases result in the listener hearing the words, but missing the speaker's ideas.

Prejudging and Overstimulation

Sometimes when listeners are truly involved in a conversation, they become overstimulated by what is being said. This results in listeners leaping to premature conclusions about what the speaker is saying. For example, a listener may leap to premature conclusions and begin to form his or her own response before the speaker has finished speaking. Likewise, listeners sometimes leap to conclusions because they either disagree with part of what is being said and want to reinforce that idea with an example from their own experience. Similarly, listeners may disagree sharply with the speaker and want to challenge publicly what the speaker is saying. Sometimes the need to challenge an idea can be stimulated by a single idea or fact that listeners know to be incorrect. In their effort to concentrate on correcting that fact, the overall thrust of the speaker's argument is lost.

Emotional factors also can contribute to overstimulation and ineffective listening. On the job, this frequently happens to new or young employees who, when confronted by a supervisor they want to please, try so hard to listen to what is being said that they only hear a small portion of the comment while missing the gist of the conversation. In other instances, single phrases can trigger anger in ways that blot out everything else that is said. Further, no matter how hard the speaker tries to reorder what he or she is saying to help the listener understand, the listener's mental block may continue.

Prejudging also involves non-verbal factors of communication. Too often the type of clothes, the physical appearance of the speaker, the speaker's mannerisms or habits, or the speaker's voice tone and facial expression cause a listener to miss the spoken meaning of the words. While you must pay attention to these non-verbal clues in order to receive the complete message, if they contradict the verbal message, receive emphasis instead of the words, or simply do not support the words, they can be a problem. Further, if the non-verbal cues are similar to those used by the listener in certain situations, upon seeing them, the listener assumes the context will go in certain directions, regardless of whether it does or not.

Partial Listening

Partial listening is a factor that can take several forms including fragmented listening and pretend listening. Fragmented listening occurs when the listener listens only for certain points or facts rather than attempting to understand the entire idea being discussed. Pretend listening occurs when the listener either is uninterested in what is going on or is waiting for his/her turn to speak. In either case the listener does not concentrate on the message being delivered by the speaker and probably will miss what is being said.

One especially difficult type of partial listening is the tendency of everyone to avoid difficult subject matter. Often listeners may engage in the more elementary parts of the conversation, but "tune-out" as the content of the message becomes increasingly complex or difficult even though they may still pretend to be listening. The usual result is that listeners become completely lost because misunderstood sentences or missed words become cumulative. Soon they are helplessly lost in the conversation and do not/cannot respond *or* clarify the message.

Ineffective listening increases as persons get older, due largely to the individuals acquiring and practicing poor listening habits. The most frequently used bad habits have been depicted in Figure 3. Note that the list highlights the factors previously discussed.

Figure 3: Bad Listening Habits

1. Premature dismissal of subject matter as uninteresting or unrelated.
2. Criticizing speaker's apperance, mannerisms and delivery.
3. Becoming overstimulated by a remark and preparing your response before the speaker has finished talking.
4. Listening only for facts and/or minor points rather than the main idea.
5. Trying to outline everything you hear.
6. Pretending to pay attention to the speaker.
7. Noticing (or not working to ignore) distractions.
8. Avoiding difficult materials.
9. Permitting emotional words to affect the listener.
10. Wasting the time between the rate of speaking words and the rate of thinking.

Adapted from: Ralph A. Nichols and Leonard A. Stevens. *Are You Listening?* McGraw Hill Book Co.; New York; 1957.

Exercises

Answer the following questions about ineffective listening.

1. Imagine you are observing a conversation between a supervisor and an employee. The employee is complaining about a piece of equipment that continues to break. The supervisor's "beeper" goes off and the supervisor excuses himself. What happened and what would you recommend to the employee?

2. List all the poor listening habits you can recall.

3. Observe a typical conversation for 10 minutes. How many poor habits did you notice? Do this on-the-job and at home. In what settings does better listening occur?

Answers

1. distraction, start over with the compliant
2. refer to Figure 2.

Improving Listening Effectiveness

Because each individual is unique, it is impossible to establish a single set of rules for effective listening. However, there follows a set of strategies that you can use selectively to improve your listening skills. The basic idea is that while you listen, try to imagine yourself saying what the other person is saying. In that way, you can see where problems in logic or meaning exist.

Ask Clarifying Questions or Offer Clarifying Comments.

The most useful technique for effective listening is to ask clarifying questions or to make clarifying comments. A clarifying question is a question that you as a listener ask the speaker about what she or he said. In the question you state exactly what you think you understand the speaker to have said and ask if your understanding is correct. Frequently you will ask clarifying questions about both the main ideas of the conversation and more detailed facts or points. Usually, it is a good idea, when suggesting what you understand, to include examples that demonstrate what you believe you have learned. Do not be bashful or self-conscious in asking the questions because the conversation is simply wasted time if both parties do not benefit from the experience. Ask your questions in a positive manner that does not require the speaker to defend his or her position. Ask your question so that it permits the speaker to offer additional explanation or description. For example, imagine that another electronics apprentice is describing or showing you how to wire a particular circuit in a machine. The explanation is difficult because of the number of capacitors and resistors in the circuit. When the apprentice has finished his explanation, you are not sure you understand how to do the job. There are several ways you could question the speaker. You could say *"Would you expect that?"* or *"What does this capacitor do again?"* However, the most effective type of question would be a clarifying question that would indicate what you believe you understand from the explanation and ask if it is correct. Your comment might begin "If I understand this, first I believe...What do I have confused, and how?" If your understanding is correct, then ask a second question about some part of the explanation about which you are less certain. By indicating what you think you know, you identify for the speaker the areas where you need additional information.

A clarifying comment is a summary statement or a summary comment that you offer at the conclusion of the speaker's comment. It indicates what you believe to have been the main point of the

speaker's comment. By using it, you ask if your understanding is correct. This means you must think about what the speaker is saying both in terms of the speaker's purpose and the message content. Then, before you answer the speaker's question or offer a related comment, you suggest what you believe you understood. The speaker must then either confirm or correct your understanding before you respond.

Adopt a Predisposition for Listening

Several techniques will help you be a more effective listener with relatively little effort. For example, as a listener, you improve the probability of understanding by: (1) assuming the speaker has something worthwhile to say; (2) avoiding and ignoring distractions including the urge to daydream; (3) looking at the speaker and standing or sitting quietly while maintaining eye contact; and (4) listening to the speaker's entire comment before forming an opinion or response. Each of these techniques improves your receptivity to information as a listener.

Think With and Ahead of the Speaker

Work with and ahead of the speaker to think about what is being said. More specifically, process the information so that you separate out, in your own mind, the speaker's purpose, facts, main ideas and opinions. For example, you need to identify for your own thinking the speaker's main idea. Once you have noted the main idea, then you can consider each of the supporting facts separately in order to decide if each is valid, reasonable, and supportive of the main idea. The main idea is usually the speaker's topic and conclusion. Supporting ideas are usually the evidence —— the points, facts and opinions —— a speaker uses to back-up or register the main idea. As you think about the evidence offered by the speaker, try to separate fact from opinion; then decide if the facts are valid, sufficient, and compelling. For opinions, decide if they are justified and logical. Further, note intended or unintended bias. Decide if the facts and opinions offered support the central idea and if they are relevant to your own information needs. Further, determine if the entire comment or argument is logical or reasonable.

Attend to Non-Verbal Messages

The words spoken are one message, the way they are spoken is a second message. You must "listen" to the non-verbal message because it reveals the true feelings of the speaker. Look for and listen for voice tone, gestures, eye contact and the other non-verbal cues mentioned earlier. Be particularly careful to note instances when verbal and non-verbal information reinforce each other as well as instances when they contradict each other. Both kinds of information are essential for understanding.

Figure 4 lists the better listening habits including those discussed above.

Figure 4. Good Listenting Habits

1. Look for areas of common interest or concern between yourself and the speaker.
2. Listen to content and non-verbal cues, but avoid non-verbal distractions.
3. Hear the entire comment before responding.
4. Listen for new ideas and supporting facts and opinions.
5. Listen for a while before taking notes or considering a response.
6. Work at being predisposed to listen.
7. Avoid or eliminate distractions.
8. Work at listening to difficult material.
9. Avoid being distracted by emotional words or phrases.
10. Use thought speed to think with and ahead of the speaker, considering, purpose, evidence, and logic.

Adapted from: R.G. Nichols and L.A. Stevens, *Are You Listening*? New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1957.

Additional Information

For additional information about effective listening, you may want to read:

C.H. Weaver. *Human Listening*. Indianpolis: Bobbs-Merrill Educational Publishing, 1972.

E.A. Erway. *Listening*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1979.

Self-Test Exercises

Answer the following questions about listening. Check your answers with those in the Appendix. If you answer 70% of the items correctly, continue work in the next chapter. If you score less than 70%, repeat your work in this chapter.

1. Approximately what percentage of all communication is verbal?

   (a)55% (c)75%
   (b)65% (d)85%

2. Explain what is meant by the "time difference" between the number of words per minute that can be spoken by the average speaker and the number of words that can be processed per minute by the average mind.

Answer:_____

3. What is the most frequent cause of ineffective listening?

Answer:_____

4. If a fellow apprentice says something that is partially wrong and you miss the part that is right in order to correct the part that is wrong, what has happened:

Answer:_____

5. What is the most useful technique for effective listening?

Answer:_____

6. How does assuming the speaker has something to say and looking at the speaker improve listening?

Answer:_____

4. Asking Questions

Chapter Overview

Purpose:	To acquaint apprentices with information about and techniques for asking questions.
Preassessment Score:	Write in the following space the number of correct answers from Pretest questions 12-15.____ If you answered all four questions correctly, skip to the posttest. If you missed one or more questions continue work in this chapter.
Prerequisites:	Chapter 1 and 2 of this module.
Resources:	Time - at least 45 minutes to complete. Material - Pencil.
Performance Statement:	At the conclusion of your work in this chapter, you will critique and pose questions to demonstrate their effective use.
Performance Measure:	A fifteen-minute paper-and-pencil test to be taken in the related subjects setting.
Standards:	To be successful you must answer at least 70 percent of the posttest items correctly.
Activities:	1. Read text, examples and illustrations and commit information to memory. 2. Work questions, examples and problems. 3. Complete and check the self-test exercises and posttest.

Introduction and Objectives

Asking questions is the most useful and critical communication skill. A question expresses an idea and seeks a response from the person to whom it is asked. Questions are the principal communication tools available to you to gather and assemble information about the situations in which you find yourself. Among the purposes for which you as an apprentice can use questions are:

- seek new information about job requirements, work procedures and expectations;

- review and clarify your understanding of information, of directions or instructions, or major points and of summaries of activities;
- ask for and receive evaluations and feedback of work;
- focus attention on particular problems or concerns;
- request assistance or encouragement;
- offer assistance or encouragement; and
- build self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness.

The primary reason for asking questions is to gain additional information. There is a direct relationship between the type and form of question you ask and the type of informational response you receive. If you ask only specific, narrow and fact-related questions, then most likely you will receive specific, narrow and fact-related responses. If you ask a question that can be answered in yes and no terms, then most likely you will receive a yes-no response. If you ask a question that deals with information transfer and application, then most likely you will receive an information transfer or application response.

As you work through this chapter, you will learn about and practice asking questions. You will demonstrate your competence in this skill upon completion of the unit by being able to:

1. Critique questions so as to explain their strengths, limitations and major components; and
2. Construct and pose appropriate questions for various types of situations.

Principles, Examples and Applications

Good questions are questions that elicit the kind of response the questioner desires. Questions are judged by their clarity and their ability to elicit needed information. Clear questions leave no doubt about the purpose of the question. Further, good questions permit the respondent to focus on the concerns of the questioner, to elaborate on information or to explain the relationship of ideas and facts.

Questions are of different types and are grouped according to the type of information required to answer the question. For example, some questions are uncomplicated and require only simple recall of specific facts to provide the single right answer to the question. This is a question like "What tool is this?", such questions are called convergent questions. Other types of questions called divergent questions require that many types of information be presented to answer the question. An example of a divergent question is "How many different ways can you weld this type of joint?"

Asking good questions -- questions that are clear and that elicit the information you seek from the question -- requires practice and effort. The liklihood of your being successful in your questioning efforts is increased both with practice and by following several basic rules associated with asking questions. The basic rules are:

1. Identify Purpose(s) of Question

Before speaking, consider the purposes you want to achieve with your question. The purpose of your question is the "why" for asking the question. The purpose may be to acquire additional infor-

mation; to clarify learner understandings of tasks, expectations, or prior learning; or to seek or offer help or assistance. Whatever the purpose, communicate it to your listener. Remember, your questions stimulate thought from the person to whom you asked the question in addition to meeting your individual information needs.

Sometimes your question may serve more than one purpose. When that is the case, phrase the question so that each purpose is clear and their order of importance is understood. It is your responsibility to phrase the question in understandable terms. The person to whom you ask the question cannot provide you with the answers you seek unless he or she understands what you want.

As you think about purpose, recall that the purpose and the intent of the question may not be the same thing. The purpose is the underlying reason for asking the question while the intent is the information or benefit you hope to achieve from asking the question. For example, say you have the task of taking down and cleaning up wooden forms used to pour concrete floors. You know how to use the hammer and nail-pull to take down the forms and take out the nails. You do not know, however, where to stack the lumber for future use or where to discard the unusable scraps. Therefore, you ask the crew chief where and how he or she wants the reusable lumber stacked and where to put the trash. Your purpose in asking the question was to seek new information in order to do your job as you understood it. Your intent was to learn exactly where to put the products of your next task.

Exercises

Consider each of the following several questions and identify the purpose and the intent of the question.

1. "How large in inches did you say that the pins we are making for that machine must be?"

   Purpose: Intent:

2. Where are the tools for lay-out and paste-up work?

   Purpose: Intent:

3. May I help you answer the customer's question?

   Purpose: Intent:

Answers

1. Purpose: Reconfirm understanding — Intent: Determine length of part
2. Purpose: New information — Intent: Locate needed tools
3. Purpose: Offer assistance — Intent: Determine if person to who question is asked needs/wants help

2. Phrase Question Carefully

Before you speak, consider exactly how you will phrase each question. When phrased properly, a good question will have the characteristics of: (1) conveying both your purpose and intent in asking the

question; (2) using vocabulary shared by you and the person to whom you are asking the question; (3) being phrased so that it is grammatically acceptable.

Conveying purpose and intent. As indicated earlier, you must do this in order for the question to be understood and/or answered. A good question will leave no doubt about what is being asked, even if those to whom the question is put neither know the answer nor how to find it. Just say exactly what you mean. Further, when possible, avoid asking questions that can be answered simply by saying yes or no unless that is the information you want. For example, say for your related subjects information class you must calculate the force necesary to lift a load using various types of pulleys. You wonder if you must use the formula over again each time, or if there is some acceptable shortcut you could use within certain sets of questions. Before you ask the question, you phrase it two different ways in your head:

Option #1: Do I have to use the formula over again from the beginning for each problem?

Option #2: Would you please explain the rules about finding out how much force is needed to lift a load with different types of pulleys? I want to know if there is a shortcut I can use to save some time.

You realize that the first option provides an opportunity for a yes/no answer. In addition, it is somewhat unclear about the purpose and intent. Option 2 is better although it could still be improved. It clearly identifies both purpose and intent as well as avoiding yes/no types of answers.

Using vocabulary shared by you and the person to whom you are asking the questions. The most important rules about vocabulary are to avoid ambiguous statements and to use words and phrases appropriate to the task and that both you and the person to whom you are speaking understand. Too frequently the person asking the question assumes that the person to whom the question is being asked knows more than they do about whatever it is that the questioner is thinking. Remember, even when the two of you are working together, if you ask a question, you must set the limits on the answer and indicate the situation about which you are asking/thinking. Without the context, the person to whom you are speaking will not understand what you have asked or need. In addition, give as much information as possible about what you are asking in the vocabulary that you choose. Be sure to use words you both understand. Also use any job-specific terms that help to explain what you want to know. Be direct; do not beat-around-the-bush because it too often causes confusion.

The following example makes these points graphically. The situation is that of a beginning apprentice plumber who must solder copper pipe in a bathhouse and he does not remember the type of solder to use. The apprentice considers two ways of asking the question. The purpose is to get specific task information and the intent is to find out what kind of material to use.

Option #1: Am I right in assuming that acid flux solder is correct for use with copper tubing in a bathhouse?

Option #2: What kind of solder should I use on copper tubing that carries water?

Option two is clearly the less ambiguous question. Further, it uses more appropriate and direct language.

Phrasing question so that it is grammatically acceptable The language in your questions does not have to be perfect, but it does need to express your thought and do so in a way that does not make the person to whom you are speaking think that you are illiterate or stupid. The following grammatical guidelines will help:

1. Use the correct verb tense. Tense means the timing of verbs or when the action you are describing has, is, or will take place. The most important tenses are present, past and future tenses. Note that for regular tense verbs, the past tense simply adds an "ed" to the present tense while the future tense adds a "will" to the present tense.

2. Use accurate subject-verb agreement. Agreement simply means that the subject and verb fit with each other in terms of number (singular or plural). You must use plural verbs if the subject is plural.

3. Use pronouns correctly. Remember that the pronouns he, she and I usually are used in (as) subjects of sentences while pronouns him, her and me usually are used as objects and in predicates of sentences.

4. Use complete sentences. Usually it is best to include only one idea per sentence. Avoid cramming too much information into a single sentence and never leave thoughts or words dangling.

3. Ask Questions in a Manner that Encourages the Response You Want.

After thinking about the question and phrasing it in your mind, you must ask it in a way that will encourage an answer. The considerations you must make in asking questions are: (1) timing; (2) voice; and (3) tact/assertiveness. In terms of timing, ask the question at an appropriate moment. The appropriate moment may be during the period when the information is being used, during a set-aside period for asking questions, before or after work (or class) or during a break, or any of a variety of other times. Avoid asking questions at awkward, embarrassing or dangerous times and always provide enough information in your question so the person to whom you are speaking can identify the situation about which you are speaking.

Your voice is important. In asking questions, emphasize those points that are of greatest importance. Ask the question directly and distinctly and make sure that you show some enthusiasm. *What you say and how you say it* are of almost equal importance as the question itself.

Use tact and assertiveness in asking your questions. If you demonstrate that the answer is important to you, you increase the probability of a careful, useful and prompt answer. It is usually a good idea to avoid asking (or implying) evaluative information in your questions. Instead you get the best information in response to probing and exploratory questions that are non-judgmental.

Once you have asked a question and have received a response, you must do two other things. First, acknowledge that the question has been answered through a comment, a gesture or by paraphrasing the answer. The paraphrasing is especially useful because it confirms to the other person your understanding of the answer.

Second, do something with the answer you received. Use it, reject it, store it or in some other way indicate to the respondent that you value their time/effort enough to attend to the answer. Using the answer -- if it is correct and useful -- is the best way to keep your credibility with the person with whom you spoke.

Self-Test Exercises

Answer each of the following questions and check your answers against those provided in the Appendix of this book. If you answer 70% of the items correctly take the Posttest at the end of the booklet. If you score less than 70%, repeat your work in this chapter.

1. How are the type of question asked and the type of answer received related?

   Answer: _____

2. Remember that a question's purpose is the underlying reason for asking it while the intent is the exact information you hope to receive in response. Read the following questions and identify the purpose and intent of each.

   a) Foreman to apprentice.
   "How do you think that line is supposed to be run?"
   Purpose:_____ Intent:_____.

   b) Apprentice to apprentice
   "Roger, will you explain to me how the hydraulics of this lift work?
   Purpose:_____ Intent:_____

3. Why are tact and assertiveness important in asking questions?

   Answers: _____

4. Once you have asked a question and received an answer, what must you do?

   Answer: _____

5. Appendix

Answers To Self-Assessment Pretest

1. Responding
2. False
3. a
4. d
5. It is confused and usually the action or non-verbal message prevails
6. d
7. a
8. c
9. e
10. a
11. c, b, a, d
12. d
13. Ambiguous; poor language usage
14. b
15. Purpose: Acquire new information
    Intent: Learn importance (and form) of writing questions

Answers To Self-Test Exercises

Chapter 2: Communication Requirements and Components

1. Listening
2. (a) deciding what to say; (b) getting attention; (c) speaking
3. Actions
4. b.
5. Jargon are words that have meaning only for small groups of people. Someone outside the group will not share the meaning of the word and so will not understand what was said.

6. Description of behavior deals with observable action. It does not deal with *"why"* so it requires fewer guesses and reduces the need of the person to whom feedback is given to be defensive. Behavior is obvious and can be described and discussed by everyone who observed it.

7. a) organize information and work through it systematically
   b) consider audience
   c) use examples
   d) avoid distractions
   e) ask questions

Chapter 3: Listening

1. d

2. People can think more quickly than they can speak. This means that as you listen you have extra "time" above and beyond required time for listening that can be used either constructively or that can be a distraction.

3. Distractions

4. As a listener, you become overstimulated or prejudged the information and missed some critical aspects of what was said.

5. Asking clarifying questions or offering clarifying comments.

6. It improves a predisposition for listening by encouraging the listener to avoid distractions and concentrate and by making the speaker aware that someone is listening to him/her.

Chapter 4: Asking Questions

1. The type of question asked usually determines the type of answer/information received. If you ask a yes-no question, you usually will get a yes-no answer. If you ask an unclear question, you will receive an unclear answer.

2. a. Intent: Check apprentice knowledge Purpose: Directions for procedure

2. b. Intent: New information Purpose: Explanation of process

3. They demonstrate that the question and answer are important to you as the questioner.

4. Acknowledge receipt of the answer and use the information.

Posttest

Directions: Answer the following questions and compare your answers with those provided. For those questions where your answer and the suggested answer correspond, consider the skill learned. For those items where your answer and the suggested answer differ, review the materials in the booklet. Score your test according to the sections at the end of the answer sheet.

1. What are the three parts of the communication process?

   Answers:

   a) _____

   b) _____

   c) _____

2. What happens to your message if you say one thing but do something else?

   Answer: _____

3. Which of the following types of communication devices is *least* useful for clearly conveying and understanding a spoken message? (Circle only the letter of the best answer)
   a) examples

   b) eye contact

   c) feedback

   d) repetition

4. Examine each of the following non-verbal situations and indicate the effect of the behavior on the speaker or the listener (whichever is designated).
   a) eye contact between speaker and listener on the speaker: _____
   on the listener: _____

   b) listener squarely facing the speaker, sitting comfortably and slightly inclined toward the speaker.

   on the speaker: _____

   c) speaker's fluctuating voice tone on the listener: _____

5. Consider the following communication situation and suggest at least four ways about how the feedback was useful as well as how it could be improved.
   Anne Clark, a journeyman printer, was speaking with three apprentices about the Offset and Heidelberg presses. She provided comments to each apprentice individually, detailing what she had observed them doing in their work. She indicated areas of strengths and limitations using individual samples. She suggested better procedures when problems were noted. She also asked why apprentices had performed certain ways.

6. Joe Fox, a related subjects instructor, was lecturing on Pascal's Principle, explaining how hydraulic systems work. He had talked for ten consecutive minutes using a carefully organized lecture about the background, math and science theory involved with the principle. He noticed the apprentices daydreaming. What two things might you suggest to him to better stimulate learner interest?

7. How do emotions, convictions and biases affect effective listening?

8. What three techniques can you use to encourage yourself to listen to and process difficult information.

9. Identify the purpose and intent of the following questions.

   a) "Am I correct in using this bit to drill out the bolt?"

   Purpose: _____ Intent: _____

   b) "How should I tie into this electrical box?"

   Purpose: _____ Intent: _____

10. Read the following questions and point out the potential problems with each.

    a) Apprentice to related instructor requesting assistance with math: "How do I perform metric conversions?"

    b) Apprentice to apprentice about local campaign: "What's in the new union for us?"

Answers To Posttest

1. a. Initiating b. Attending c. Responding

2. Message becomes confused and audience is more likely to believe action as opposed to words.

3. d.

4. a. Speaker: eye contact from listener indicates interest and support.
   Listener: eye contact from speaker indicates sincerity.
   b. Speaker finds support and encouragement from listener's behavior.
   c. Listener notes areas/points for emphasis from the speaker.

5. Useful because (a) of individual attention/comments; (b) dealing with observation and observed behavior; (c) make points using examples; (d) pointed to strength and limitations; (e) dealing with current events; (f) suggested improved practices could be improved (g) by talking about the "what" and avoiding the "why". (Correct if you got at least 4 of the 7)

6. (a) Use examples; (b) Vary voice tone to add emphasis; (c) Speak in the language of the audience; (d) Ask questions; and (e) Use visual or model materials (Correct if you got 2 of the 5)

7. Emotions, convictions and biases affect listening by distracting the listener through overstimulation, by encouraging the listener to hear only a small part of the comment or by encouraging prejudging before the comment is completed.

8. Techniques include: (a) Making clarifying comment; (b) Thinking with and ahead of the speaker; (c) Attending to non-verbal messages; (d) Adopting a predisposition for listening; (e) Avoiding distractions; and (f) Listening to idea before judging.

9. a. Purpose: Confirm an understanding Intent: A yes or no response
   b. Purpose: New information Intent: Directions for procedure

10. a. It is ambiguous; What does the apprentice want or need? It has no distinguishable purpose or intent. Also, it is in rather formal language.
    b. It is ambiguous with little information to respond to.

Scoring:

There are a total of 23 points that can be scored on the posttest. You need at least 16 points to complete successfully, your work in this booklet. The point value, by question, is as follows:

Question #1, three points, one point for each item.
Question #2, two points.
Question #3, one point.
Question #4, three points, one point for each item.
Question #5, two points, 1/2 point for each answer.
Question #6, two points, one point for each item.
Question #7, one point.
Question #8, three points, one for each item.
Question #9, four points, one for each item.
Question #10, two points, one for each item.